


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-157 (Canceled)

158. (New) An electronic communications system comprising:

a message sender for sending one or more messages via a first communication medium to subscribers of an access service;

 a rule definer for enabling said subscribers to define one or more rules to be applied to said sent messages automatically upon receipt at said access service, at least one of said rules resulting in the conversion of sent messages for retrieval via a second communication medium for subsequent retrieval by said subscribers;

a message access device for enabling said subscribers to access said sent messages at said access service via a third communication medium and to cause said messages to be available for retrieval via a fourth communication medium; and

a retrieval device for enabling said subscribers to receive said sent messages via said second communication medium or said fourth communication medium.

159. (New) The system of claim 158 wherein said first, second, third and fourth communication media are selected from a group including at least voice mail, electronic mail and fax mail.

160. (New) The system of claim 158 wherein said rules include filter, forward and conversion options to be applied to said sent messages.

161. (New) The system of claim 158 wherein said rules are defined by message senders and message receivers.
162. (New) The system of claim 158 wherein said access service is selected from a group including at least Internet Service Providers and Telecommunications Service Providers.
163. (New) A method for communicating electronically comprising the steps of:
- sending one or more messages via a first communication medium to subscribers of an access service;
 - enabling said subscribers to define one or more rules to be applied to said sent messages automatically upon receipt at said access service, at least one of said rules resulting in the conversion of sent messages for retrieval via a second communication medium for subsequent retrieval by said subscribers;
 - enabling said subscribers to access said sent messages at said access service via a third communication medium and to cause said messages to be available for retrieval via a fourth communication medium; and
 - enabling said subscribers to receive said sent messages via said second communication medium or said fourth communication medium.
164. (New) The method of claim 163 wherein said first, second, third and fourth communication media are selected from a group including at least voice mail, electronic mail and fax mail.
165. (New) The method of claim 163 wherein said rules can include filter, forward and conversion options to be applied to said sent messages.

166. (New) The method of claim 163 wherein said rules can be defined by message senders and message receivers.
167. (New) The method of claim 163 wherein said access service is selected from a group including at least Internet Service Providers and Telecommunications Service Providers.
168. (New) A cross-media communication system comprising:
- a telecommunications network for providing telecommunications services, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;
 - a telephone access interface for sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said telecommunications network;
 - an electronic mail gateway for sending and receiving electronic mail messages; and
 - a rule definer for enabling subscribers of an information service to define one or more rules to be applied to said voice, fax, and email messages automatically upon receipt at said electronic mail gateway and said telecommunications network, said rules including at least
 - a first rule resulting in the conversion of messages sent via said electronic mail gateway such that said messages can be retrieved via said telephone access interface, and
 - a second rule resulting in the conversion of messages sent via said telephone access interface such that said messages can be retrieved via said electronic mail gateway,

said telephone access interface further enabling subscribers to cause messages sent via said telecommunications network to be retrieved via said electronic mail gateway.

169. (New) The system of claim 168 wherein said rules include filter, forward and conversion options to be applied to said messages.

170. (New) The system of claim 168 wherein said rules are defined by message senders and message receivers.

171. (New) The system of claim 168 wherein said subscribers receive a notification via said electronic mail gateway of a message sent via said telephone access interface.

172. (New) A method for cross-media communications comprising the steps of:

providing telecommunications services, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;

sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said telecommunications network using a telephone access interface;

sending and receiving electronic mail messages via an electronic mail gateway; and

enabling subscribers of an information service to define one or more rules to be applied to said voice, fax, and email messages automatically upon receipt at said electronic mail gateway and said telecommunications network, said rules including at least

a first rule resulting in the conversion of messages sent via said electronic mail gateway such that said messages can be retrieved via said telephone access interface, and

a second rule resulting in the conversion of messages sent via said telephone access interface such that said messages can be retrieved via said electronic mail gateway,

said telephone access interface further enabling subscribers to cause messages sent via said telecommunications network to be retrieved via said electronic mail gateway.

173. (New) The method of claim 172 wherein said rules include filter, forward, and conversion options to be applied to said messages.

174. (New) The method of claim 172 wherein said rules are defined by message senders and message receivers.

175. (New) The method of claim 172 wherein said subscribers receive a notification via said electronic mail gateway of a message sent via said telephone access interface.

176. (New) An electronic communication system comprising:

a telecommunications network for providing telecommunications services, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;

a telephone access interface for sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said telecommunications network;

an electronic mail gateway for sending and receiving electronic mail messages; and

a fax message converter for accessing fax messages via said telephone access interface and converting said messages into image file attachments to electronic mail messages for subsequent retrieval via said electronic mail gateway.

177. (New) A method for communicating electronically comprising the steps of:

providing telecommunications services via a telecommunications network, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;

sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said telecommunications network using a telephone access interface;

sending and receiving electronic mail messages via an electronic mail gateway; and

accessing fax messages via said telephone access interface and converting said messages into image file attachments to electronic mail messages for subsequent retrieval via said electronic mail gateway.

178. (New) An electronic communication system comprising:

a telecommunications network for providing telecommunications services, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;

a telephone access interface for sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said telecommunications network;

an electronic mail gateway for sending and receiving electronic mail messages; and

a fax message converter for receiving fax messages via said telephone access interface by converting said messages into text messages through optical character recognition, and employing text-to-speech conversion to convert said text messages into audio streams for playback via said telephone access interface.

179. (New) A method for communicating electronically comprising the steps of:

providing telecommunications services via a telecommunications network, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;

sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said telecommunications network using a telephone access interface;

sending and receiving electronic mail messages via an electronic mail gateway; and

receiving fax messages via said telephone access interface by converting said messages into text messages through optical character recognition, and employing text-to-speech conversion to convert said text messages into audio streams for playback via said telephone access interface.

180. (New) An electronic communication system comprising:

a telecommunications network for providing telecommunications services, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;

a telephone access interface for sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said telecommunications network;

an electronic mail gateway for sending and receiving electronic mail messages;

an electronic mail converter for receiving electronic mail messages via said telephone access interface by employing text-to-speech conversion to convert said electronic mail messages into audio streams for playback via said telephone access interface; and

a voice message converter for receiving voice messages via said telephone access interface and converting said messages into audio file attachments to electronic mail messages for subsequent retrieval via said electronic mail gateway.

181. (New) A method for communicating electronically comprising the steps of:

providing telecommunications services via a telecommunications network, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;

sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said telecommunications network using a telephone access interface;

sending and receiving electronic mail messages via an electronic mail gateway; and

receiving electronic mail messages via said telephone access interface by employing text-to-speech conversion to convert said electronic mail messages into audio streams for playback via said telephone access interface; and

receiving voice messages via said telephone access interface and
converting said messages into audio file attachments to electronic mail
messages for subsequent retrieval via said electronic mail gateway.

